

ATARI[®] 5200[™]

FOOTBALL



Game designed and implemented by Jim Huether.

ATARI welcomes your comments. Please address all correspondence to:

ATARI Customer Relations, 1312 Crossman Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086

To insert your ATARI 5200™ game cartridge, hold it so the name on the label faces you and reads right-side-up. Carefully insert the cartridge into the slot in the center of the console. Be sure the cartridge is firmly seated, but do not force it. The **POWER ON/OFF** switch is located on the lower right side of the ATARI 5200. Press this switch to turn the power on **after** inserting your game cartridge. *See your Owner's Manual for further information.*



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HANDS UP!

1. YOUR BALL and GOAL-to-GO

As always, it's freezing cold and wet in Buffalo. Terrible conditions for playing football! The field's a snowy mess. The temperature's so low that the receivers have to wear gloves, and everybody else in the stadium is wearing a ski mask.

But all that matters very little to you. Right now you're sitting warm and cozy in your own home. And as the quarterback of the ATARI offensive team, you're facing a fourth down situation inside your opponent's 20-yard line during the closing seconds of your own football game. The big decision confronting you: What play are you going to call up?

The defense has been rough all day. You wish that you would have spent more time practicing those pass patterns and learning the exact moments when you have the best chance of completing a pass. But it's too late now. These are game conditions, rookie, and that other guy is out for blood—yours.

A field goal could tie things up. But that's pretty chancy at any distance. Besides, like Vince Lombardi, you believe there is no tomorrow, so you're going for the touchdown to win. Time's running out, though. Think fast. What will work?





IT'S A PASS!

You call a short pass with two eligible receivers. Defense sets up for a long pass. Good. Maybe you'll get a break. Nah, scratch that. Defense is changing its play at the line of scrimmage.

No problem. You quick-snap the ball while your opponents are still in motion. Sneaky, but legal. Oh, look! You've fooled the linebacker into committing himself to the sideline receiver. Great! Now you have to evade these blitzing linemen until the precise moment when your other receiver can most likely catch a pass. You know it's only gonna be a few microseconds when he'll be in the clear, so your timing has to be good. Real good.

Darn! Where is all that pass protection when you need it the most? These characters who are supposed to be blockers act more like ghosts. That's OK, though. You can pass from any position behind the line of scrimmage and the ball will still go toward your intended receiver. Close enough, anyway.

Ah, there he is. Quick! Fire that ball! Thread the needle! Uh-oh, it looks like it's a little behind him. Better shift control to the receiver to adjust his position and give him an even better chance to gobble up that pigskin.

Good work! He's got it. Now—quick as a wrist flick—make the upfield cut that evades the defensive safety and fly for pay dirt. Just get that first step on him, and you're long gone. Yes, yes, good move, hero. It's touchdown time....

Oh, no. Your opponent has switched control to that pesky, pursuing safety. Persistent bulldog! You know you can't outrun him. Better try to dodge him and angle into the end zone for the winning score. Move that joystick controller, speed demon. Cut a path only a shadow could follow.

Ouch! Wrong turn, turkey. You're grounded on his 7-yard line.

Never mind. You did get a first down. Now you've got a goal-to-go situation. Hurry! Call your next play before the clock runs out. Get out there and win this one for the Gipper!

2. GAME PLAY

The basic rules of football apply with some modifications that you should find intriguing.

Like regular football, the object of ATARI FOOTBALL in two-player contests is to score more points than your opponent. You do this by getting touchdowns, field goals, and safeties. In one-player games, you'll want to become proficient in the main features of the game, especially in the art of passing the ball successfully.

Each team has six players, one of which is always controlled by the joystick. Under certain circumstances, you can transfer joystick control to another player. A lot of game strategy involves knowing when and how to execute that transfer.

You can run the ball, but you'll never fumble. You can pass it, but you risk having it intercepted. You can kick field goals and

punts as good as the pros, but you can't kick the ball out-of-bounds (like they occasionally do!).

There are no two-minute warnings and no (legal) time outs. There are no penalties either—unless, of course, you elbow your competitor and he or she socks you back. (If you want half-time entertainment and refreshments, you'll simply have to supply your own!)

Pay attention to the scoreboard, since it will display the instructions you'll need to play the game—once you've learned the basic rules. The home team (pink, or orange) gets all its signals on the left side of the scoreboard; the visiting team (blue, or light purple) gets all its cues on the right. (*Note: Colors may vary on different TV sets.*)

The scoreboard clock runs twice as fast as normal time, so

remember to synchronize your heartbeat whenever you play ATARI FOOTBALL. (Figure 1.)



Figure 1 - Selecting Game Options

3. USING THE 5200™ CONTROLLERS



Figure 2 - 5200 Controller

Use two 5200 controllers with this ATARI game cartridge. Plug the controllers into jacks 1 and 2 on your console. In all games, you can activate your player selection options, your game selection options, and the **START**,



RESET, and **PAUSE** functions only with the controller plugged into jack 1. (Figure 2.)

KEYPAD OVERLAYS

For your convenience, two keypad overlays are included with this game. Slip the overlay tabs into the slots provided on the controller keypad. (Figure 3.)



Figure 3 - Keypad Overlay

PLAYER SELECTION

When you turn the **POWER** switch **ON**, a flashing scoreboard will appear, instructing you to "SELECT OPTIONS OR START GAME." You can play a practice game for one player only, or you can play a competitive game between two players. Press the * key (or, the square marked **2 PLAYERS/PRACTICE** on your overlay) until your choice is indicated on the scoreboard. (Figure 4.)



GAME SELECTION

You can choose to play a regulation game of 15 "minutes" per quarter, or you can play a short game of "6-minute" quarters. Press the # key (or, the square marked **REGULATION/SHORT GAME** on your overlay) to indicate your preference.

START

As soon as you have displayed your game choices on the scoreboard, press **START**. The players will charge onto the field and go into a huddle formation, ready to receive your first commands to play ball. (Figure 5.)

RESET

The **RESET** function has a safety mechanism built into it which requires you to press it twice before you can select game options and begin a new game. When you press **RESET** once, the scoreboard will present you with a choice:

HIT RESET AGAIN TO SELECT GAME
OR
HIT PAUSE TO CONTINUE

By pressing **RESET** a second time, you will return to the pre-game selection mode where you can then select new game options or begin a new game by pressing **START**.



Figure 4 - More Game Options

If—in your excitement—you happened to hit **RESET** by accident and don't want to begin a new game, press **PAUSE** to return to the place you left off. Avoid hitting **RESET** that second time unless you're sure you want to send the current game into the annals of football history, because you won't be able to recall it after that.

PAUSE

Press **PAUSE** to suspend the game; press it again to return to the exact place you left off. **PAUSE** cannot be used to “freeze” the action during any single play.

CONTROLLER ACTION

Your joystick controls the movement of the odd-colored player on your team. This control-player will be green (or yellow) for the home team, and dark blue/purplish (or black) for the visitors



Control-Player Control-Player

Figure 5 - Opening Game Huddle

team. Move the joystick in the direction you want this control-player to go. (NOTE: Colors may vary on different TV sets.)

The red fire buttons—especially the lower ones!—have several functions. Use them to pass, to kick, to hike the ball early, to free-up the defensive control-player before the snap, and to transfer control from one player to another. The fire buttons on either side have identical functions and are designed as a convenience for right-and left-handed players.

The numbered buttons (from 1 through 6 only) are used by both offensive and defensive teams to select formations and to call up plays.



4. TRAK-BALL™ OPTION (Future Accessory)

This ATARI FOOTBALL cartridge offers an option to play with a TRAK-BALL controller. (Available for purchase in mid-1983.) You will need two TRAK-BALL controllers to play ATARI FOOTBALL, or you can employ a joystick and a TRAK-BALL in combination. Plug them into jacks 1 and 2 on your console. You can switch from one type of controller to another in mid-game without altering the current game situation. You can also change the jacks you plug each controller into without affecting game play.

Each type of controller has different characteristics. Some games are better played with a joystick; others with a TRAK-BALL. Experiment to find which feels more comfortable for you.

Follow the instructions in Section 3, **USING THE 5200 CONTROLLERS**, regarding player selection, game selection, and use of the **START**, **PAUSE**, and **RESET** buttons. The numbered buttons on either side of the ball can be used to call up plays during any single scrimmage. The inside fire buttons (those nearest the ball) correspond to the lower fire buttons on the joystick controller and have identical functions. The outer fire buttons (those furthest from the ball) function exactly like the upper fire buttons on the joystick.

TRAK-BALL ACTION

Rotate your TRAK-BALL controller in the direction you want your control-player to go. Spinning the ball faster will not affect running speed in any way, but if you don't turn the ball, the control-player can't run at all.

5. CALLING PLAYS

As illustrated in the accompanying **PLAYBOOK**, there are 18 offensive plays and six defensive plays to choose from.

In the one-player practice version, you play offense only. You do not play against the computer for high scores. Instead, you alternate between offense



on both the home team and the visitors team to become familiar with the features of the game. You control the quarterback with your joystick, while the computer takes care of executing the defensive play and directing the movement of the defensive control-player. However, you must call up both the offensive and the defensive plays by using the appropriate controller for each side. When the ball changes hands, simply use the other controller to call up the plays for the new offensive team.

In the two-player version, each person calls up his own play and directs the movement of the control-player with the joystick.

OFFENSE



All 18 offensive plays are executed from three formations. Within these formations, you can run, pass, or kick, according to the specific play you select.

Offense picks its play in a two-step process:

- Select a number (from 1 through 3) in response to the "PICK FORMATION" cue on the scoreboard. (Figure 6.)
- Select another number (from 1 through 6) in response to the "PICK PLAY" cue.



OFF: PICK FORMATION

Figure 6 - Offense receiving PICK INFORMATION cue; Defense already selected play

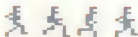
When offense lines up for the scrimmage, the control-player will be the quarterback. Except when you decide to punt or kick a field goal, one or two pass-eligible receivers will be designated, according to the specific play you select. The other players will be linemen functioning as blockers. (Figure 7.)



OFF: PICK PLAY

Figure 7 - Offense receiving PICK PLAY cue

RUNNING



Except for the field goal play, all the offensive plays (including the punt) offer running possibilities. The ball carrier is faster and more maneuverable than the defensive linemen who pursue him. But he is slightly slower than the defensive control-player, who can eventually overtake him unless he shows some fancy footwork.

In one-player games, the computer automatically transfers this speed advantage to the defensive player closest to the ball carrier once the running back has crossed the line of scrimmage. (You'll notice this when you see the color change occur.) In two-player games, the defensive side can transfer control and assign this speed advantage to the defender nearest the ball carrier by pressing the lower fire button. *This transfer of joystick control can only be made once during any single play.*

PASSING



Except for the field goal and the punt plays, all the offensive plays offer passing possibilities. The differences between the plays occur primarily in the number of pass-eligible receivers in each play and in

the variety of pass patterns these receivers run.

After the snap, use your joystick to direct the movement of the quarterback away from the charging linemen long enough to get the pass off. Look for your receivers as they run through their patterns, and pass the ball by pressing one of the red fire buttons.

In pass plays, the lower fire button on either side will release the ball to the receiver designated as I in the **PLAYBOOK** diagrams; the upper fire button will pass the ball to the receiver designated as II. (Figure 8.)

Look over the plays and you'll notice that the receivers run patterns that are consistent in their positioning to each other.



Figure 8 - Offensive Play 1-1:
Lower fire button throws to I;
Upper fire button throws to II

For example, during any particular quarter of play, if the I receivers run patterns in the top part of your screen, the II receivers will run patterns that lead them into the lower part of the screen.



The art of successful passing is a matter of proper timing. Poor timing will result in Incompleted passes, or worse—Interceptions. If you complete a pass, the receiver will immediately become the control-player whose movements you can then direct with your joystick. As the ball carrier, the receiver can now run with the ball until he scores a touchdown, runs out-of-bounds, or is tackled by one of the pursuing defenders.

PUNTING



You can call up a punt by pressing button 2 in response to the "PICK FORMATION" cue and then button 1 in response to the "PICK PLAY" cue on the scoreboard.

After the hike, press the lower fire button and the ball will be kicked a random distance, then scooped up and returned by a defensive player.

Be careful when you punt, though. If the linemen get too

close to the kicker, they can block the kick. The ball will then be blown dead and returned to the line of scrimmage for the next series of plays.

KICKING FIELD GOALS



You can kick a field goal by pressing button 3 in response to the "PICK FORMATION" cue and then button 1 in response to the "PICK PLAY" cue.

After the hike, the ball will automatically be kicked a finite distance with a limited degree of accuracy toward the goal posts—depending on your proximity to the goal line. Your chances of kicking a successful field goal are as good as the pros, since the completion percentages displayed in the PLAYBOOK are drawn upon a full NFL season's statistics. Consult that chart when you need to make an intelligent decision about whether to take a chance on kicking a field goal.

If the defense can organize its blitz well enough, the field goal kick can occasionally be blocked. On a missed field goal, the ball will come out to the line of scrimmage, or to the 20-yard line if the scrimmage was inside the twenty.

If you want to fake a field goal and then go for it, press 3 and then 2. You'll get a running/passing situation with two eligible receivers.

DEFENSE



The defensive team has six basic strategies, each with slightly different characteristics that can be mastered only with experience.

Defense selects its play by pressing a number from 1 through 6 in response to the "PICK PLAY" cue on the scoreboard:

- 1 - For a tight line defense against the up-the-middle run and medium-range pass plays
- 2 - For a wide line defense that provides a good rush and coverage against the medium-range pass
- 3 - For a wide line defense against a long pass
- 4 - For a 5-man line that provides the best blitzing capabilities and the best field goal defense
- 5 - For short pass defense and goal line defense
- 6 - For punt defense



When the defensive team lines up, the linemen will be assigned to charge the ball carrier whenever he goes; the safeties will track the pass-eligible receivers during their pattern; the control-player will be initially designated as the middle linebacker. (Figure 9.)

However, by pressing the lower fire button before the ball is snapped, you can free-up the control-player from his computer-assigned position as a middle linebacker, and reposition him anywhere else on the field. If he touches the line of scrimmage, though, he will be frozen until the ball is hiked.

CHANGING PLAYS



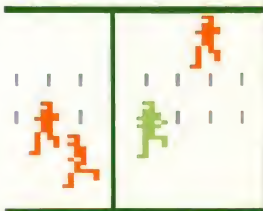
After each side has selected its play, the teams will assemble at the line of scrimmage. The scoreboard will then offer an opportunity for each side to "CHANGE PLAY?". You have to be quick, though, because the ball will be automatically hiked within about 8 "ATARI football-seconds" after the line-up.

Offense can change its play, but not its formation at this juncture. For example, offense can change from play 1-2 to 1-4 (or any other play in the series 1 formation), but it can't go from 1-2 to any play beginning with formation 2 or 3.



Figure 9 - Defensive Play 3-1—Long Pass Coverage.

Defense can change its formation, but while it does, offense can immediately hike the ball by pressing the lower fire button. If that button is not pushed, the ball will be automatically snapped.



6. SCORING

Touchdowns count for seven (7) points. After a score, the ball will automatically be brought out to the twenty-yard line to begin the next series of plays.

Field goals count for three (3) points, with the ball brought out to the twenty.



Safeties score two (2) points for the defensive team, with the ball brought out to the fifty-yard line in their possession.

7. STRATEGY

SCOREBOARD CLOCK

As in professional football rules, the scoreboard clock operates continuously following run plays and completed passes; it stops after Incompleted passes, Interceptions, kicks, scores, running out-of-bounds, turnovers, and dead balls.

However, in order to compensate for "running-out-the-clock" tactics by dastardly villains and other unscrupulous players, the clock will stop at the end of one play and begin again as soon as the defense calls its next play. The clock will run down for no more than thirty seconds. If the offense hasn't made up its mind within that span of time, the clock will freeze 30 seconds after the defense called its play. The clock will resume at the snap.

To gain some control over the clock, master the sideline passes that can be effective as short-gainers and clock-stoppers, too.

PLAYER RUNNING SPEEDS



The players run across the gridiron at different speeds relative to each other. The order of their speed from fastest to slowest is:

- Receiver in a pass pattern (the fastest player only while still in his pattern)
- Defensive control-player
- Offensive control-player
- Defensive safeties who cover the receivers
- All other linemen, and receivers after completing their pass patterns

RUNNING PLAYS AND BLOCKING STRATEGIES

Running plays are an integral part of the game and should not be overlooked. In the plays specifically designated as "run" plays in the **PLAYBOOK**—namely, 1-2, 1-5, and 1-6—the blockers have superior strength for a random amount of time and can actually open up a hole for a fleet-footed running back. As in real life, these blockers also get fatigued, so you can't expect that hole to be there all the time. Sorry, no guarantees! (*Figure 10.*)

You can also make effective use of your blockers downfield by weaving your ball carrier behind and around them to gain extra yardage. Since the linemen are programmed to follow the ball and are slower than the ball carrier, you can't hide behind any "flying wedges" or other blocking formations like that, though.

Thanks to the miracles of electronic circuitry, you'll soon observe that in running downfield, the straightest line is not necessarily the quickest way to zip across the field toward your goal. Try running on a slight diagonal



Figure 10 - Blockers creating a "hole" in play 1-5



Figure 11 - Running on the Diagonal

to the yard lines. Develop the technique of cutting back on your own beeline path by making U-turns and curlicues to evade your pursuers. You'll be amazed at the extra life this will put in your game! (*Figure 11.*)



THE ART OF PASSING



In a pass play, the ball is thrown to certain "cut-points." The art of completing a pass involves timing the release of the ball to coincide with the arrival of the intended receiver at one of those cut-points.

You can throw the ball to match the receiver's arrival at his first cut-point; or you can toss it after he makes that cut and runs to his second cut-point; or you can even try to connect with him after he completes his pattern and begins to run back toward the ball carrier. (*Figure 12.*)

Keep in mind, though, that it becomes increasingly difficult to complete a pass if you throw the ball after the receiver has run through his prearranged pattern. If you throw the ball after the intended receiver has run beyond his last cut-point (and therefore completed his pass pattern), the ball will travel to where the receiver was at the moment you pressed the fire button.

Meanwhile, the defensive safety—obligated to track the receiver only while he was in his pattern—is now free to rush for the ball that is heading in their direction. And since he is now faster than the receiver, chances are, the defensive



Figure 12 - Play 2-3 — Sideline and Post Patterns



Figure 13 - Play 3-3 — "Bomb" and "Slant Out" Patterns

safety will intercept. This means that, there is a limited amount of time in which you could throw a successful "buttonhook" pass; but the chances of getting the ball intercepted increase as soon as the defensive safety's running speed exceeds the receiver's.

Ultimately, it's all a matter of practice and timing. Learn the pass patterns in the one-player version and you'll be a tough competitor when the opening whistle blows. (*Figure 13.*)

You can complete some pass plays, like the long "bombs," by throwing the ball at an angle to the receiver. If your quarterback lines up directly behind your intended receiver, the chances are greater that the safety can come in between the passer and the receiver and thus intercept the pass.

Interceptions occur when a defender is both in the direct line of fire of a thrown pass and within two yards of the intended receiver. If a thrown pass appears to have gone "through" a defender, it means he was not close enough to the intended receiver to intercept the ball, and that it went "over his head."

In the screen plays—numbered 1-4, 2-4, and 3-4—the offensive blockers bait the attacking linemen by offering no resistance at the line of scrimmage. Within a short time, a receiver emerges from that pack, ready to catch a pass, and—unless the defense has "read the screen correctly"—completely in the clear.



TRANSFERRING JOYSTICK CONTROL

Transferring joystick control after the ball is hiked is one of the key features of ATARI FOOTBALL. If you intend to win, you should become very familiar with this feature. You can transfer joystick control by pressing the *lower fire button* (*Figure 14*) under the following circumstances:

OFFENSE

While the ball is in mid-flight to an intended receiver, you can transfer control to that receiver to adjust his position and thereby improve your chances of completing that pass. If the intended receiver is 1 and you already pressed the lower fire button once to pass the ball, you have to press it a *second time* to transfer control while the ball is in mid air.



Figure 14 • To Transfer Joystick Control

DEFENSE

Defense can transfer joystick control to the player closest to the ball carrier at the following times:

- After the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage
- As soon as a pass is completed

- As soon as a pass is intercepted
- As soon as a punt is scooped up and is being returned

Whether you are on offense or defense, remember: You can *only make this transfer of joystick control once during any single play*, so pick your moment well.

8. FOOTBALL GLOSSARY

Blitz. A defensive strategy in which the linebacker joins the linemen in rushing the quarterback behind the line of scrimmage.

Down. The basic unit of game play; one scrimmage play. (The offensive team has four plays, or downs, in which to gain 10 yards and keep possession of the ball.)



Downfield. The playing area beyond the line of scrimmage.

End Zone. The 10-yard area beyond the goal line where a receiver can catch a pass and score a touchdown.

Field Goal. Kicking the ball through the goal posts; worth 3 points.

Interception. A pass that the defense catches and is allowed to run with.

Linebacker. The defensive leader, positioned just behind the front line.

Linemen. The players at the line of scrimmage at the beginning of each play.

Pass. Throwing the football.

Pattern. A prearranged route run by a pass receiver.



Punt. Giving up the ball by kicking it downfield to the other team; a strategic move on a fourth down situation when getting a first down appears risky or hopeless.

Quarterback. The offensive leader who receives the snap from the center. He can run or pass with the ball.

Receiver. An offensive player who is eligible to catch a pass.

Runner. The player who is in possession of the ball; the ball carrier.

Safety. Tackling a ball carrier in his own end zone; worth 2 points for the defensive team; also a defensive back covering a receiver.

Scrimmage. The action that occurs when a play starts with the center hiking the ball and ends with a dead ball; amounts to one down. The line of scrimmage is the starting point for each play.

Snap. Hiking the ball to begin the scrimmage.

Tackle. The act of stopping the ball carrier.

Touchdown. Crossing the defensive team's goal line by running the ball into the end zone or completing a pass; worth 7 points in ATARI FOOTBALL, since the extra point is automatically added.

9. SCORECARD

TEAMS	SCORE	DATE
Home Team		
Visitors		
Home Team		
Visitors		
Home Team		
Visitors		
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Home Team		
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Home Team		
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Visitors		



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